U. S. FOREST SERVICE

RESEARCH NOTE NC-23

NORTH CENTRAL FOREST EXPERIMENT STATION, FOREST SERVICE—U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Folwell Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101

Cattle in the Woods or Woods in the Pasture?

ABSTRACT. — Most of the intensive grazing on forested land in the Missouri Ozarks is occurring on land with a low potential for growing commercial timber.

Woods grazing reportedly is detrimental to good hardwood timber production and has been discouraged for many years by forestry interests. Yet approximately half of the privately owned commercial woodland in the Missouri Ozarks were being grazed as late as 1959 (table 1). Seemingly private landowners have failed to "get the message."

However, there is more to the story. About 25 percent of the land defined as commercial forest is less than 10 percent stocked, and much of it is actually range land or brushy pasture. Additionally, most of the intensive grazing takes place in the submarginal post-blackjack oak and redcedar stands common in the northwestern and southwestern Ozarks (fig. 1) and little takes place in the truly "commercial" stands of the eastern Ozarks where more timber is grown.

When one realizes that low-potential commercial forest land may be more efficiently and profitably used to grow grass,[1] it becomes apparent that the message is getting across to many landowners — that cattle grazing and the maximum growth of high-quality timber do not mix[2] and that as much grass can be grown on one acre of brush-free range land as is grown on 50 to 100 acres of wooded range.[3]

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[1] *Ehrenreich, John H., and Robert A. Ralston. Forage and timber production alternatives on shallow soils in the Ozarks. Soc. Amer. Forest. Proc. 1963: 80-83. 1964.*

[2] *Martin, S. C. The place of range livestock in the Missouri Ozarks. J. Range Manage. 8: 105-111, 1955.*

[3] *Ehrenreich, John H., and R. F. Buttery. Increasing forage on Ozark wooded range. U.S. Forest Serv. Cent. States Forest Exp. Sta. Tech. Pap. 177, 10 pp. 1960.*

A. J. BJUGSTAD
Range Scientist
H. S. CRAWFORD
Ecologist

April 1967

Table 1. — *Commercial forest acreage and grazing on private land in Regions of the Missouri Ozarks, 1959*

(In thousands of acres)

Item	Total	Regions			
		Eastern	South-west	North-west	River-border
Total land area 1/	22,586	6,150	5,528	5,058	5,850
Total commercial forest land (private)	10,361	3,279	2,818	2,252	2,012
Grazed commercial forest land (private)	5,079	1,574	1,465	1,396	644
Intensively grazed 2/	3,308	721	1,071	1,013	503
Lightly grazed 3/	1,771	853	394	383	141

1/ From Areas of the United States, 1950 Bureau of the Census.

2/ Intensive grazing: 50 percent of better herbaceous species removed, poorer forage plants and sprouts grazed, many cow chips present, and evidence of livestock trampling.

3/ Light to moderate grazing: 0-50 percent of better herbaceous species removed, few or no poor species grazed, only a very occasional cow chip, and may be some evidence of trampling.

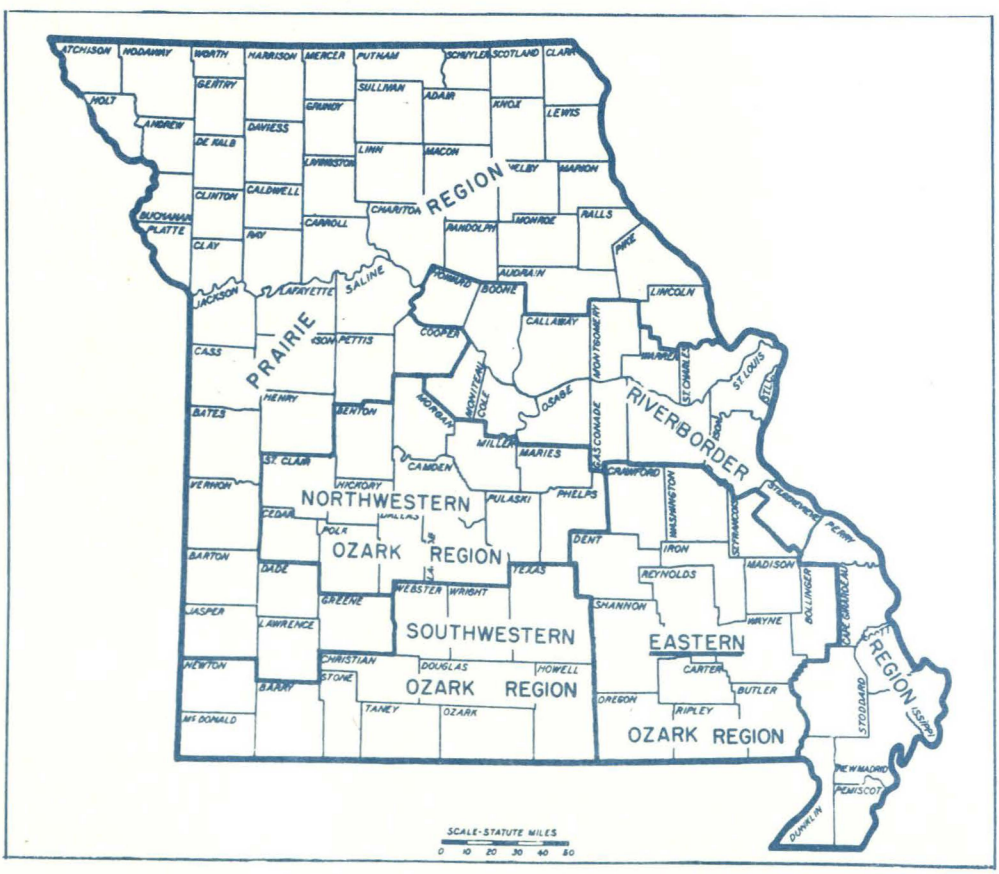

Figure 1.—Location of Ozark regions in Missouri.